

# Romans 14:1-12

## Why Preference Issues Shouldn't Divide Christians

July 4, 2010 Sunday Morning Pastor Stuart Fraser

- I. Introduction:** In this practical part of Romans we have seen Paul exhort believers to be in a right relationship with God (**12:1**), a right relationship with the world (**12:2**), a right relationship with believers (**12:3-8**), a right relationship with difficult people (**12:9-21**), a right relationship with human government (**13:1-7**), and with your neighbor (**13:8-14**).
- A. Churches are made up of all sorts of ages, education, maturity, personalities, cultural, and religious backgrounds, which make it a challenge to get along
- B. Some members come from a long line of evangelicals, some no church at all, some come from very liberal upbringings (surfer churches), and others very strict legalistic upbringings. Some have been converted out of paganism, a cult, liberalism, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, atheistic humanism, or religious indifference.
- C. The Lord did not plan to have a divided church with hundreds of factions.
1. **Eph 4:2-3** – “with all humility and gentleness...showing tolerance for one another in love, *being diligent* to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
  2. **Col 3:14** – “Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”
  3. “The problem is that Christians are always dumping on one another. Instead of getting on with living their own lives as best they can to give glory to God or...living so as to win nonbelievers to Christ, they are wasting their time trying to find fault with one another.”
  4. “The church has no authority to decide questions of personal liberty in things not expressly forbidden in Scripture.” (*Scofield Reference Bible* on **Rom 14:1**)
- II. Why Preference Issues Shouldn't Divide Christians (vv. 1-12)**
- A. Servants Answer to Their Master (vv. 1-4)
1. God Commands us to **Accept** His Servants (v. 1)
    - “Accept” (*proslambano*) is a compound verb intensifying its meaning. It is middle imperative (reflexive) – “keep on taking to yourselves”
    - R.C. Sproul – “mature believers are not to be contentious and argumentative with those who are still working through the difficulties of the early stages of their Christian development.” (R.C. Sproul, *Romans*, p. 231)
    - **Gal 5:13** – “For you were called to freedom, brethren; *only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh*, but through love serve one another.”
  2. God Commends us not to **Judge** His servants. (vv. 2-3)
    - Several years after Peter began his apostolic ministry he was still afraid to eat animals that were unclean – it took 3 visions to convince him (**Acts 10:15-16**)
    - “Regard with contempt” (*Exoutheneo*) – strong term for viewing someone as worthless, being nothing. Not just disrespect but abhorrence.

- “The liberated believer is tempted to look upon his legalistic brother as being too rigid and restricted to be of any use to the Lord. The legalist, on the other hand, is tempted to think of his liberated brother as being too free-wheeling and undisciplined to serve Christ effectively. This is the root of disunity.”
  - “Throughout the ages, churches have been plagued by those who proudly consider themselves to be spiritually superior” (MacArthur, *Romans*, 278)
3. God **Corrects** His Servants, not us (v. 4)
- **1 Cor 4:3-5** – Paul wasn’t concerned about what others thought of him, because God would examine him.
  - **James 4:12** – “There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge (*krino*) another?”
  - **Prov 29:25** – “The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.”
- B. Servants Live to **Please** Their Master (vv. 5-9)
1. Be Convinced in your own mind (v. 5)
    - “Fully convinced” (*plerophoreo*) – means to get a conviction (Cf. **Rom 4:21**)
    - **Col 2:16-17** – “Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day – things which are a mere shadow of what is to come...” (**Gal 4:9-10**)
    - Be Thankful in your own way (v. 6)
    - Note: “to the Lord” is used 6 times in 5 verses. Everything’s for God’s glory.
    - **1 Cor 10:31** – “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
  2. Be Living & Dying in your own life (vv. 7-9)
- C. Servants are Judged **Solely** by Their Master (vv. 10-12)
1. It is a terrible thing when people “play God,” but it is inexcusable for God’s own people to judge others and despise others.
    - **Matt 12:36** – “I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the Day of Judgment.”
  2. Our responsibility is not to judge, despise, criticize, or belittle, but to approve, love, edify, and lift one another up.

**III. Conclusion:** What kind of conclusion can we draw from God’s message from this passage? How is it that we are to apply these truths this morning?